

# THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

No. 2.

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VOL. 3.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE BIBLE.

Mr. Editor—If in my first essay I appear little conversant in polemic disputation, you will, I hope, place it to the account of my sex. On these subjects, you know, both custom and habit have seldom permitted us to speak; except, indeed, it be to name the text, or pass unqualified encomiums on the parson's manner, his pious exhortations, or his exceeding *devotional look*. Narrow are the bounds which our forefathers set to the exertion of female powers, and arbitrary the sway which they rigidly enforced. This, perhaps, was all natural enough, and needed not to be assisted by religious admonition. But St. Paul, a crusty old bachelor, if I may guess, with all the frigidity of feeling which a man made up of icicles could be supposed to possess, has added to the severity of our bondage condition; both as it respects body and mind. And it is by the force of no ordinary exertions in civilization, that man has become sensible that his more delicately formed helpmate may safely exercise herself upon other matters, besides nursing the children, attending to the sewing and knitting, playing on the harpsicord or piano, and attending the declination of a few French verbs. I will tell you, sir, when I was married, I could soon perceive that my husband looked upon me as his property, or as a *thing* of mere obedience to his will. Nor was it long before he took upon him the good old practice of reading the Bible in his family. This reading of the Bible, you must know, has had its manifold uses. It has helped many a weak and wavering husband to very grave notions of their importance and authority; and furnished short sentences of sage note, to be used on all occasions, by persons who never possessed two ideas of original growth during their whole lives. But the more my husband read, the less he seemed inclined to converse on scripture; until at the end of about a year and a half he came out like an explosion, blowing up Moses, Samuel, and the rest of the scripture worthies altogether. I must confess I was considerably shocked at this event; and had it not been that his conduct about the same time evinced a greater degree of liberality of sentiment towards my sex, I cannot say what would have been the consequence.

In all the time between his commencing the scripture above mentioned, and to the day of his full rejection of it, he had no other book but the Bible. He has since told me, that previous to that time he had always read the Bible, even from his earliest youth upwards, with the most unlimited faith in its truth. But now, he not only began to doubt of its verity, but of its morality, too, which ended as I have before said,

in a complete explosion of the whole system. It was not long before my pious mother, who had often sat under the preaching of the celebrated parson Edwards, became acquainted with the fact of her having an *infidel* son in law. It grieved her much; but what was to be done: she could only lament an evil that was likely, as she said, to carry with it circumstances dangerous to the future peace and happiness of her child. With all the tenderness, therefore, which could belong to maternal affection, she *fearfully* inquired what *effects* I had perceived from the *new opinion* of my husband. And when I frankly observed to her that I considered him a better man, she faintly answered, that she *hoped* it was true; but I could perceive her mind was not easy.

Since the period of his first rejection of the authority of the scriptures, my husband has never hesitated to express his opinion on that as fearlessly as on any other subject; and to converse upon it in his family with the same freedom—believing it to be in some measure criminal to hold an opinion of which he might appear to be either ashamed, or of which he might be thought to be in doubt.

With this preface, you will not certainly be surprised at my appearing now the decided opposer of a system of religion, which consigns my sex to the mere drudgery, or which permits us to indulge only in the mere frivolities of human existence; and, however weak the first essays, it will surely be thought no inglorious endeavor to convince the world that we can reason.

I have understood, sir, that in Albany there is published a paper called the *Antidote*. By which, and from what I have otherwise seen, I conclude those who were at the christening would have it considered a medicine to be administered to those who have already been infected by the poison of the *Correspondent*, or rather as a preventive of the reading, of those who have as yet never seen your wicked paper. But what, in the name of my pious grandmother, (who never read the Bible except with a most religious nasal tone,) what, I say, do these Antidote gentlemen mean by their publication. In their solicitude to defend, it does appear to me, they give the clearest evidence that they doubt the potency of what they wish to have thought the WORD OF GOD. And does the word of God, then, when left even handed against the reasoning of man, need to be backed with exertions like these?!! I will not insult you nor your readers with an answer: it is too plain to need any. The condition of the men, together with the tottering condition of the system they support, alternately flash upon the mind, and the riddle is solved. For the space of more than three hundred years the shelves of libraries and bookstores have literally groaned with the weight of thousands and tens of thousands of massive volumes, written in explanation of as many thousand *inexplicable* points of our faith, and in defence of quite as many *defenceless* positions to be found in the Bible; and yet these gentlemen are very suspicious that all is *not yet safe*. The truth is, all is not safe. Eloquence may exhaust her choicest figures, and rhetoric lend the best specimens of her art; yet, we repeat it, all is not safe, and they know it. Eternal damnation may be denounced from the pulpit a thousand and a thousand times against the rude hand that may assail the gothic pile; yet, at the first breath of *infidelity*, (as it is called by the defenders of the

faith,) which only agitates the fogs of superstition, you shall see such men as those who conduct the *Antidote* flying with the utmost solicitude to every part of the antique edifice, each one with a *prop* to support what he considers the most rotten and the most likely to fall.

But, dropping all metaphor, this is helping God with a witness, and brings to my mind what actually happened in Troy twenty-four years ago. Parson Coe, then pastor to the presbyterian congregation, preached twenty-six sermons to prove that Christ was, actually, the son of God; without at the same time adducing a single fact, or eliciting a solitary argument, that had not before been resorted to, to patch up a genealogy which must ever be rejected by reason. And when reason enters her protest again, which she certainly will, in such a manner as to *command attention*, the people will have to *pay* for twenty-six, or perhaps thirty, more sermons, somewhere else, to prove the same thing over again. Depend on it, sir, these gentlemen of the *Antidote*, and those of this sort, mean to be *well paid for their medicine*.

Athens, January 12, 1828.

OCTAVIA.

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IMPORTANT EXAMINATION. BY LORD BOLINGBROKE.

*Continued from page 3.*

*Of the Person of Moses.*—Was there ever such a person as Moses? There is so much of prodigy in him from his cradle to his death, that he appears to be an imaginary personage, like the magician Merlin. If he had really existed; if he had performed the dreadful miracles attributed to him in Egypt, would it have been possible that no Egyptian author should have spoken of these miracles, and that the Greeks, the lovers of the marvellous, had not recorded a single word respecting him? Flavius Josephus, who, to extol his despicable nation, seeks after the testimony of the Egyptian authors who have spoken of the Jews, has not the face to quote one that makes mention of the prodigies of Moses. Is not this universal silence a proof that Moses is only a fabulous personage?

Those who have paid any attention to antiquity, know that the ancient Arabs invented many fables, which succeeding ages made known to other nations. They had imagined the history of ancient Bacchus, whom they suppose to have lived long anterior to the time when the Jews tell us their Moses made his appearance. This Bacchus, or Back, who was born in Arabia, had written his laws on two tables of stone; he was called Misem, a name which has some resemblance to that of Moses; he was picked up in a box on the waters, and the signification of his name is, "saved from the waters;" he had a rod with which he performed miracles, and he could change his rod into a serpent at his own pleasure. This same Misem passed the Red Sea dry shod at the head of his army; he divided the waters of Orontes and Hydaspus, and suspended them to the right and left, and a fiery column lighted his army during the night. The ancient Orphic verses, which were sung in the orgies of Bacchus, celebrated a part of these extravagancies. This fable was so ancient, that the fathers of the church believed Misem or Bacchus to have been Noah. We must observe that Bacchus was known in Egypt, Syria, Asia

Minor, and Greece, a long while before any nation had heard the name of Moses, or even of Noah and the whole of his genealogy. Every thing that belonged exclusively to the Jewish writings was absolutely unknown to both eastern and western nations, from the name of Adam to that of David. The wretched Jews had their own chronology and fables apart, which bore only a slight resemblance to those of other nations. Their writers, who were very tardy in commencing their labors, ransacked every thing they could find among their neighbors, and disguised their thefts very badly. Witness the fable of Moses, borrowed from that of Bacchus; their ridiculous Samson from that of Hercules; Jephtha's daughter from Iphigenia; Lot's wife imitated from Eurydice, &c. Is it not highly probable that the Jews adopted this fable, and that it was written as soon as they had obtained some knowledge of literature under their kings? They must have a little of the marvellous as well as other people, but they were not the inventors. Never was there a petty nation more stupid; all their falsehoods were plagiarisms; and all their ceremonies were visibly performed in imitation of those of the Phœnicians, Assyrians, and Egyptians.

What they themselves have added appear to be such disgusting stupidities and absurdities, that they excite our indignation and pity. In what ridiculous romance could we bear to hear of a man changing all the waters into blood by a flourish of his rod, in the name of a god unknown, while the magicians can do the same thing in the name of their local deities? The only superiority that Moses obtains over the king's magicians is, in creating lice, which they were unable to perform. This made a great prince say, that as far as lice were concerned, the Jews could do more than all the magicians in the world.

How did an angel of the Lord come and kill all the cattle in Egypt? How did it happen that the king of Egypt had afterwards an army of cavalry? And how did the cavalry proceed to cross the muddy bottom of the Red Sea? How did the same angel of the Lord slay all the first born of the Egyptians in a single night? It was then that the pretended Moses ought to have taken possession of this beautiful country, instead of running away, like a coward and a vagabond, with two or three millions of men, among whom it is said that there were six hundred and thirty thousand combatants. It was this prodigious multitude that he took with him to wander and die in the wilderness, where they could not even find water to drink. To facilitate this grand expedition, his god divides the waters of the sea, which he raises like two mountains to the right and left, in order that his favorite people may perish with hunger and thirst.

All the rest of the history of Moses is equally absurd and barbarous. His quails; his manna; his conversations with God; twenty-three thousand of the people killed by order of the priest; twenty-four thousand massacred at another time; and six hundred and thirty thousand combatants in a wilderness where they could never find two thousand men! Assuredly the whole of this appears to be the height of extravagance; and it has been said, that Orlando Furioso and Don Quixote are geometrical books in comparison with those of the Hebrews. If we could find only a few rational and honest actions in the fable of Moses, we might then in reality believe that such a person had existed.



They have the face to tell us, that the feast of the Passover among the Jews is a proof of the passage of the Red Sea. At this feast they thanked the Jewish god for his goodness in killing all the first born of Egypt; and they tell us, that nothing could be more true than this holy and divine butchery. "Can we conceive," says that declaimer and trifling reasoner, Abbadie, "that it was possible for Moses to institute sensible memorials of an event, recognized to be false by more than six hundred thousand witnesses?" Poor man! thou shouldst have said by more than two millions of witnesses, for six hundred and thirty thousand combatants, whether they were fugitives or not, assuredly lead us to suppose that there were more than two millions of inhabitants. Thou sayest, then, that Moses read his Pentateuch to two or three millions of Jews. Thou believest, likewise, that these two or three millions would have written against Moses if they had discovered any errors in his Pentateuch, and that they would have had their remarks inserted in the journals of the country. Thou hast forgot nothing, except telling us that these three millions have signed as witnesses, and that thou hast seen their signature.

Thou believest, then, that the temples and rites instituted in honor of Bacchus, Hercules, and Persius, evidently prove that Persius, Hercules, and Bacchus were the sons of Jupiter; and that among the Romans, the temple of Castor and Pollux was a demonstration that Castor and Pollux had fought for the Romans. Thus they always beg the question; and, in matters of the greatest importance to the human race, these controversial traffickers make use of arguments that lady Blackacre durst not hazard on the stage.

We see that these tales have been written by fools, commented upon by simpletons, taught by knaves, and given to children to be learned by heart; yet the sage is called a blasphemer because he becomes indignant, and is irritated at the most abominable fooleries that ever disgraced human nature.

*The inspiration attributed to the Jewish Books.*—How can we suppose that God would choose a horde of Arabs to be his favorite people, and that he would arm this horde against all other nations? And why, when fighting at the head of them, did he so frequently suffer his people to be vanquished and to become slaves? In giving them laws, why did he forget to inculcate among this little troop of thieves the belief of the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments after death, while all the great neighboring nations, such as the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Assyrians, and Phœnicians, had so long embraced this salutary belief? Is it possible that God should explain to the Jews the manner of going to the privy in the wilderness, and hide from them the dogma of a future life?

Herodotus tells us, that the famous temple of Tyre was built two thousand three hundred years before his time; and they say, that Moses conducted his troop in the desert, about sixteen hundred years before our æra. Herodotus wrote five hundred years before the vulgar æra, so that the temple of the Phœnicians subsisted twelve hundred years before Moses, and the Phœnician religion was established long before that time. This religion, as well as that of the Chaldeans and Egyptians, announced the immortality of the soul, which was never a fundamental dogma with

the Jews. We are told that they were a rude people, and that God put himself upon a level with them. With whom? Jewish robbers! God more stupid than his people! Is not this blasphemy?

*Who is the Author of the Pentateuch?*—I am asked, who is the author of the Pentateuch? I would as soon be asked who wrote the Four Sons of Aimon, Robert the Devil, and the history of Merlin the magician. Sir Isaac Newton, who so far degraded himself as to examine this question seriously, pretends that Samuel wrote these reveries, apparently to render the name of king odious to the Jewish horde, whom this detestable priest wished to govern by himself. I am of opinion myself, that the Jews could neither read nor write, till the time of their captivity under the Chaldeans, because their letters were first Chaldaic, and afterwards Syriac. We have never had an alphabet purely Hebraic.

I fancy that Esdras forged all these tales of a tub after the captivity. He wrote them in Chaldean characters in the jargon of the country, in the same way as the peasantry of the North of Ireland make use of the English alphabet. The Cuteans who inhabited Samaria wrote the same Pentateuch in Phœnician characters, which they made use of in that country, and this Pentateuch is still extant.

I believe Jeremiah might contribute a good deal to the composition of this romance. We know that he had a strong attachment to the Babylonish kings; it is evident from his rhapsodies that he was paid by the Babylonians, and that he betrayed his own country; he wishes every thing to yield to the king of Babylon. The Egyptians were at that time enemies of the Babylonians, and it was to make his court to the great king who was master of Harshalaim Kedusha, called by us Jerusalem, which made Jeremiah and Esdras conspire to instil into the Jews such a horror for the Egyptians. They took care to say nothing about the people of the Euphrates. They are slaves that keep upon good terms with their masters. They confess, indeed, that the Jewish horde has almost always been enslaved, but they respect those to whom they were then in subjection.

Whether or not any other Jews have written the feats and tricks of their kings, is a matter as unimportant to me as the History of the Knights of the Round Table, and the Twelve Peers of Charlemagne; and I fancy the most useless of all researches must that be of finding out the name of the author of a ridiculous book. Who first wrote the histories of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto? I do not know, nor do I care about knowing it.

*To be continued.* 38

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THE NEW YORK OBSERVER.

Mr. Editor—"Precious fruits of deism!" exclaims the *New York Observer*, in charging a deist without any name with the crime of beating his child for refusing to go and hear a deistical discourse on the Sabbath day. But, as they have not given any names of the parties, it is highly probable that this is nothing more than another pious fabrication, like every thing belonging to the "tract" system. However, should the fact be better substantiated hereafter, it will then only prove that the said

deist is more of a Christian than a deist; for it is the general practice of Christian parents to beat their children for not going willingly to their stated meetings on the same day! Indeed, so universally is beating inculcated and practised by all Christians, that it is believed that the bigots of the "Observer" cannot find one father of a family out of fifty who has not repeatedly been guilty of the very crime with which they have charged a pretended deist.

A THEIST.

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ANOTHER PIOUS FORGERY.

Mr. Editor—Pious forgeries have so long been practised with profit and impunity, by the priests of every nation, and particularly by those of the Christians, even to this day, that it is not prudent to give credit to any thing that proceeds from their interested pens and presses, unless it is accompanied with all the usual circumstantial evidence which attends the cause of truth.

There is every cause for suspecting, that nine tenths of all their pious trash, called "tracts," are nothing more than arrant forgeries, if we only look at the intangible form in which they are ushered into the world; for how few and solitary are the cases where these fables give us the names of the priests who make these great conversions, the names of the parties converted, the township where they reside, or the dates of these remarkable events! All blank, blank, blank!—and why! Because a detail of all these important items, as necessary to establish their truth, would enable doubters to investigate them too closely, and thus deprive these pious forgeries of all their efficacy in deluding the ignorant.

These reflections have been drawn from the perusal of another priestly trick, called the "Legacy," lately published in the "Orange Patriot" of your state, for the purpose of fleecing the ignorant out of some more such legacies, for the same purpose of delusion. Not a *name* of either the priest or sinner, or the residence of either, or a date, is to be found in that lengthy—"pious forgery," no doubt.

C. SCHULTZ.

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**NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1828.**

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PAINE'S BIRTHDAY.

On Tuesday last, the anniversary of the birthday of Thomas Paine was celebrated at the Academy, corner of Reed street and Broadway, by the New York Free Press Association; on which occasion upwards of 70 gentlemen sat down to a public dinner. After the cloth was removed, a number of ladies entered the orchestra, when the Chairman (Mr. Offen) delivered the following

ADDRESS:

Ladies and Gentlemen—This day, which has been considered by fanatics the birthday of a *monster* rather than of a man, is now remembered and observed by thousands, both in England and America, who a few years ago would have been struck with horror at the bare mention of the name of THOMAS PAINE. As nothing that I can advance at this time will add to the merits of a so well known and truly exalted character as

the author of "Common Sense," "Rights of Man," and "Age of Reason," I shall, as an introduction to the arrangements of the day, call your attention to the progress of liberal principles. Notwithstanding the efforts that have been made in different ages by such men as *Mirabaud*, *Voltaire*, *Hume*, and others to free the human race from the bondage of ignorance and fanaticism, their individual exertions could effect but little so long as church and state were united. When the revolution of America had dissolved this wicked and destructive alliance, then, and not till then, could *reason* attack, with any hope of success, the accumulated fraud and falsehood of fifteen hundred years.

Let it never be forgotten, ladies and gentlemen, that it was the revolution of America which gave new life and vigor to the hopeless, despairing cause of insulted, persecuted, and priestridden man. It was then that the energies and wisdom of a host of philosophers, legislators, and heroes first appeared in aid of the human race. Then it was that free and liberal opinions received an impulse before unknown, and were directed and supported by the zeal, wisdom, and patriotism of the immortal PAINE. It was the experience he gained in that ardent struggle for liberty, and the desire to give his country the benefit of his labors, which induced him to visit England and publish his *Rights of Man*. The effect this had in shaking the rotten system of that country will be long remembered, as the author of the *Rights of Man* was burnt in effigy in every city, town, and village in England—the only answer that could be given by a government which professes to be the admiration of the world!

During the war of England against France, every measure of caution and cruelty was resorted to by the British government to stop the progress of liberal opinions. The *habeas corpus* act was suspended: men were dragged to prison without knowing for what: the honest man had no security; the innocent, no appeal.

In the year 1817, the works of Thomas Paine, even his political works, were so far suppressed, that only one or two particular booksellers would sell them, and that at an enormous price, and to persons only in whom they could confide. Five dollars have been given in London for the *Age of Reason* alone, which is now selling in this city for 37 1-2 cents! At this moment all the writings of Paine are sold openly in London by Mr. Richard Carlile and others; and his theological works form the best selling standard books of the day.

In 1818, the birthday of Mr. Paine was celebrated at an obscure tavern in London, by a few friends who could confide in each other. At this time the *habeas corpus* act was suspended. In 1826, eight years after, the birthday of Mr. Paine was celebrated, in the most public manner, at the City of London Tavern, the first tavern of the metropolis. The same year, it was celebrated in a number of other places, both in England and Scotland, by the friends of liberal principles.

In 1825, a few friends in this city celebrated for the first time the birthday of Mr. Paine. Mr. Young, of Harmony Hall, was the only person who had the courage and liberality to provide a dinner on that occasion. Now, we have choice of situations; and the day will be celebrated in different parts of this city, both in public and private.



I have, ladies and gentlemen, given you a short account of the steady march of liberal opinions. I know it will increase your pleasure when you recollect that this day will be one of rejoicing, harmony, and friendship with thousands in England, Scotland, and in different parts of this vast republic.

Before concluding, permit me to say, that twelve months ago, this day, the "New York Free Press Association" took its rise, for the avowed purpose of supporting a paper, then in existence, which advocated the cause of mental freedom. The principles and labors of this Association are before the public; and I sincerely hope and wish that the friendship of the associates may be as firm and durable as I believe their efforts will be beneficial to the human race.

The Chairman then gave the following toast, which was drank in silence:

THOMAS PAINE—We meet to respect his memory, and extend his principles.

*To be continued.*

#### LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

ON THE ASSERTION, THAT "RELIGION IS THE BOND OF SOCIETY."

By H. A. Fay.

*Continued from page 9.*

In travelling around our planet, we find on its surface many nations with different customs; but the individuals are all human, with human passions. They love, hate, fight, and make peace. Whether possessing religion or not, they are in communities and tribes. There is as much real refinement of heart among the most savage people as adorns the most civilized. Wars, domestic and foreign, are as sanguinary among the luxurious citizens of a Paris, a London, and a New York, as they are between the naked tenants of caves, tents, and wigwams. In a tribe of North American Indians, the public opinion is their government and laws. A murderer becomes the victim of public indignation, and dies. All the social virtues flourish, without the aid of books. Science had dawned and made rapid strides among a people, and at a time when Jesus Christ is admitted not to have been in existence. This science struggled under a religion which opposed its progress. The benumbing effects of all religions have been the great obstacle to free inquiry; and if religion is called the bond of arts and sciences, it must mean their chains; and, instead of bond, say—bondage.

If religion is a principle which merits support, why should its discussion be a dangerous thing? Rather let it be the constant theme of every writer; let a column in every newspaper be daily devoted to it; let dissertations issue from every book store; be it the swelling harmony of eloquence from the bench, the pulpit, the bar, the rostrum, the senate house. May its sublime objects cheer the domestic fire side circle, and be its enlivening hopes mingled with science, business, and amusement. How is it now? Wherever heaven or paradise is talked of, or rather hinted at, by a young person, and dogmatically declared by an old de-

votee, universal gloom pervades the presence; the laughing ebullitions of the healthy and happy reveller in pure, natural, unsophisticated, and moderate pleasures is frowned into solemnity; the speaking eyes become lustreless, the cheek blanched with fear, or reddened by the awakened and smothered volcano of indignant feelings in the bosom of the philosophic lover of openness, truth, and hilarity.

Why should religion be such a bond in society?—stalking about among our sports, like a demon of darkness; breathing around it a chilling atmosphere, and binding in icy fetters the pure, limpid streams of honest enjoyment; like surly winter, withering at its approach the bloom of the rose, annihilating the perfumes of the grove, hushing the song of the feathered harmonists of the air, and making the pebbled brook, which frolicked and gurgled in lively gambols and soothing tones beneath the smiling summer zephyrs, one cold, unmoving, silent bed of ice.

It is urged that religious awe is a necessary restraint on licentious tendencies; that mirth would become ribaldry, and sport change to outrageous riot, but for the wholesome solemnities with which religion is clothed. When I examine the conduct of assemblies, I perceive that in courts of justice there is order, decorum, and attention. This is the influence of law, truth, and public opinion. In our family circles and social meetings proper deportment is observed, through the very love of rational enjoyment which pervades all hearts. In this place, where the doctrine is so boldly advocated, that virtue is connected with happiness, vice with misery, and that it is proper to investigate the merits of every book, especially the Bible, about which so much has been said and written; in this place, I say, where we meet, unawed by the frowns or threats of priests, kings, and aristocrats, to ask each other what shall we do today and to-morrow to make ourselves better and wiser, and happier—here there is no disorder, except the occasional muttering of a willing slave of superstitious folly.

There is enough to make us sad in this world, without conjuring up to our morbid imaginations the picture of a perpetually burning lake of fire and brimstone, where we shall be for ever tossed to and fro, by hideous demons, unless we can yield assent to unintelligible dogmas, which bid reason be still—reason, which always will speak, though it is from the deepest recesses of the mind, dungeoned there by those cunning hypocrites who revel securely amid the superstitious fears and unnatural phantoms which the knowledge of human nature has enabled them to conjure up from the ocean depths of ignorance.

My mind has, from infancy, been devoted to the discovery of new methods of making myself smile, and making my fellow creatures smile. What does man want to make him more serious than the conscious certainty of death, disease, despondency, pain, disappointment, and “the thousand ills that flesh is heir to?” What dreadful evils, I ask, are there more than these, that can result from looking at the brightest and most sunshiny fields in the landscape of Nature?

I think gloom is unnecessary; it is one of the wheels in the mechanism of despotism and priestcraft; it is a portion of that pestilence which they have spread through society. No foul, infectious plague ever made

so much devastation as superstition. Its invisible deleteriousness pervades every particle of our moral atmosphere; while these men! shall I call them men, who, the accursed keepers of this "Pandora's box," with the whites of their eyes turned towards the clouds, their honied voices mocking truth and honesty with hypocritical prayers, cry Allah! Alla! Mahomet is the prophet of God! or, in Jesus alone is there hope!

Our priests do not, at the present day, literally roast us at the stake, or chop us into little bits, as priests have formerly done when the people would be fools enough to let them. But they do what is as bad. Public credulity is their throne and altar; their titles are "the reverend," "right reverend," "very reverend," though some of them are yet scarcely bearded; and there have been some "very right reverends" the veriest scoundrels in the world, and may be now for all I know. Their weapons of cruelty are their prayers and their tender mercies. They do not, however, chop us to pieces; but when they pray to their gods to forgive us for our sins, they give in that way the signal to the deluded multitude for persecution.

Nothing is done, or seen: there is no scaffold; no gibbet; no rack—Forgive me, reason, truth, and charity, for uttering such a falsehood!—There are racks, gibbets, and scaffolds. They are erected at the corner of every street; in every public hall, and by every hearthstone, which ought to be sacred to domestic felicity. The reputation and finest feelings of the advocate of free inquiry are torn by the pincers of scornful holiness. He is gently told by one friend, "you had better be still." Another avoids him in the street, fearful of being thought an associate of irreligion. One says "it is not respectable." Ah! dreadful ecclesiastical inquisition, where friendship is doomed to officiate as executioner! If other men can bow their meek heads to this martyrdom, let me say, it is not "a bed of roses" to me.

But I think I could withdraw my mind within the secured fortress of conscious manly integrity, and laugh to scorn their engines of vengeance. I would rather be the opposer than supporter of falsehood. I would rather be frowned upon by the clouded brow of (each) every proud priest in Christendom, and, wrapping myself up in the protecting mantle of independent feeling, await the storm of his excommunicating wrath, than be the despicable adulator of his office, to lend my feeble aid in the preservation of his power, and ignobly, for fear of the ridicule of vulgar ignorance and cunning hypocrisy, forge mental fetters for my abject self and unfortunate fellow creatures: no! not even for all the luxury, and dull, insipid heartlessness, which the willing worshippers of these divines vegetate and sicken upon. Before I would submit to shame the form of man, by being the mere monkey, the ape of folly; throwing aside my reason, and exercising its functions only as the fitful breeze of fashion blew—shaping my course through life by other people's opinions—literally making every giddy fool a tyrant over myself—sacrificing my freedom of thought, and heartfelt comforts, which my nature makes congenial to me and which are harmless to others; I say, before I would submit to such degradation, to me the wretchedest slavery, I would fly to the western forests; contest my morsel of food with the bloody wolf; and

throw my fate upon the protection of the uncultivated wilds and the rocky caverns of savage nature.

But why should free born Americans permit superstition to be the bond of their shame and sufferings? Did not our ancestors leave their homes in Europe; cross 300 miles of a trackless, stormy ocean; rush desperately up the rocky shores of a new continent; drag their bloody and wounded limbs amid howling panthers and fierce Indians, and die of famine; some also by the tomahawk, by pestilence, and other hardships—for what?—to nourish with their blood the soil destined to be free from religious persecution? Their descendants, afterwards, bled before the artillery of corrupted Europe for the same inestimable blessings, and the regal sceptre of priestcraft was broken. Why do you fear? Are the fragments of that sceptre gathered up and again wielded in the chair of state? No! The secular power of the church is extinct. Why, then, do you shrink, tremble, and are silent? You shame your ancestors; they scorned to fear the thunder and lightning of ecclesiastical tyranny! they extinguished the lightning—hushed the thunders—and brought to ignominious execution the political “Jove” of theology. You, who are slaves of superstition, unworthy generation, you prostrate your recreant forms before the mere shadow; are scared at the pale, shapeless, undefined ghost, flitting in the moonshine of your distempered fancies, of that power which your fathers destroyed! Religion is the bond of society, and ye are its bondsmen.

“The true fear of God in the heart” is not the bond of the society called “The Free Press Association.” They do not profess to live in *fear*, but in pleased admiration of, and calm resignation to, the controlling principles of Nature. Their bond is the love of knowledge; and it has hitherto been found sufficient to keep them united.

It has been said that the ceremonies of religious worship are now so closely interwoven with the fibres of civilized society, that their preservation is necessary; that all ties will be unloosed if forms of religion are lost, and that now we must make the best of them; that sacred days, as Sunday, Christmas, and others, are become holidays; and that if the people were unoccupied with religious devotions, they would spend those days in mere indolence or mischief. It is also asserted that oaths, and appeals to God, are essential to the administration of justice, and that all good members of society should endeavor to heighten the solemnity of the obligations and forms, instead of diminishing it.

But, should free discussion be allowed as to religion, morality, and science in these very pulpits, whence only emanate the dogmas of a particular faith, the audiences would be as great as at present. We have found free inquiry to attract as many persons as any sermon could. As to oaths in courts of justice, they are not the real avenues to truth. A false statement, in the course of a legal trial, is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison, and the equivocater is almost always detected in cross examination. The quakers merely affirm; and since the establishment of this institution, the evidence of its members, without an oath, has been frequently admitted in court; and it is now made a rule in the judicial tribunals of the great city of New York, that the most sa-



cred asseveration of a believer in a religious system is of no more value than the affirmation of a member of "The Free Press Association."

In educating children, it has been customary to teach them that a rich man cannot easily get to heaven; that he enjoys himself in this world, and is punished in the next; but that the virtuous are martyrs here and saints hereafter. Is this calculated to *bind* the mind to virtue? The first idea that occurs to a youth on perceiving the uncertainty of divine revelations is, that if he is vicious here, he may enjoy himself, and laugh at the threatened hell. He will, and we find he generally does, launch into the sea of dissipation, until the physical pangs, which rend his diseased body, tell him that vice is *not* pleasure.

Would it not more effectually *bind* a youth to proper habits, if he was taught in infancy the great truth that true enjoyment and honesty are inseparably connected? Let the practical demonstrations of the doctrine be pointed out to him whenever his childish follies lead him to indulge in gluttony, indolence, and peevishness, and the scorn he incurs by ill treatment of others. On the other hand, let him be reminded of the pleasure he receives from honest industry. He will then become a moral philosopher by habit. His affections, entwined with those virtues which nourish happiness, bound to morality by the most powerful tie, his own interest, he will enter upon the duties of manhood, a dignified and useful citizen, a *real* freeman. It may be replied, that the world is full of deceit; that "honesty is but a ragged virtue." The deceit I acknowledge exists, but as to the rags, I think that substantial comfort and integrity may go hand in hand. To the effeminate and luxurious, I cannot promise a continuation of uninterrupted intemperate sensuality, as consistent with sincerity. But if they wish to pass through life in a feverish delirium of degrading and sickly indulgence, let them drag on their hours of insincerity, hypocrisy, and slavish assent to every folly which circumstances have given birth to in the world of fashion. These individuals cannot expect to be free from the *bonds* of fear and credulity.

To the healthy mind, and the cheerful partaker of simple, natural pleasures, whose thoughts are free as the wind, and whose habits are uncontaminated by the influence of superstition, there is more hope. Life is full of promises to them. Let them constantly pursue a rational gratification, consistent with and congenial to their desires, and they will find that the path of truth is perfumed by the most delicious flowers, and that there is a perpetual variety in the journey of life to the free and close observer of natural operations. He will see with a sharpened vision—a vision cleared from mists of fear and faith—he will behold the short sighted and the foolish running eagerly to catch the fleeting meteors of opulence, power, and glory—he will behold them heedlessly stumble into the quagmires of vexation, disappointment, and despair. Every step he takes shall be on firm ground, and he will enjoy the utmost share of human felicity that falls to the lot of mortality. A future state must be left to the arrangement of that power which has hitherto confined human knowledge to matter; for there is no greater reward to those who are under the bond of fear and faith. The *slavish* thinker is, in this respect, neither better nor worse than the *free* thinker.

*Progress of Liberal Opinions.*—In our last, we gave some gratifying particulars respecting the progress of "the Cincinnati Society for Mutual Instruction in Natural Science," and the establishment of a journal in the capital of Ohio for the purpose of diffusing liberal principles. We have now to state, that another Association has been organized in Philadelphia, under the name of the "Society of Liberal Friends," having in view objects similar to those contemplated by the New York and Cincinnati Associations. An esteemed correspondent at Philadelphia writes as follows, under date the 20th January, respecting the proceedings of the society there:

*Mr. George Houston—*

Sir—This afternoon I attended a lecture on education, delivered before the "Society of Liberal Friends," (recently established,) by Mr. Coleman, a well informed, zealous advocate of liberal principles. Mr. Coleman delivers lectures every Sunday afternoon on theological and moral subjects; and, from his natural talents, extensive information, and prepossessing appearance, cannot, I think, fail to produce much good. I am truly astonished that he should attract so large a congregation in this city of bigotry and proscription. May success attend his efforts.

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### MISCELLANEOUS.

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#### PREACHING TO THE CHINESE.

(From Voltaire.)

*Jesuit.* I tell you, my brethren, our Lord is willing to make every man a chosen vessel; it only depends upon yourselves, by believing my doctrines. You are perfect masters of your own minds, of your hearts, thoughts, and sentiments. Jesus Christ died for all, and free grace is offered to every one.

*Jansenist.* The truth is not in you, you child of wrath and perdition. You are only preaching up errors and falsehoods. Jesus Christ died only for a few, to whom grace is given. Your prayers are blasphemous; for St. Augustine and St. Paul—

*Jesuit.* Hold thy tongue, vile heretic: get out, thou enemy of St. Peter. My brethren, do not listen to this innovator, who quotes Augustine and Paul; but come to me and I will baptise you.

*Jansenist.* Take care, my brethren; if you suffer yourselves to be baptised by a Molinist, you will be damned to all eternity. I will baptise you in a few months after I have taught you the nature of grace.

*Quaker.* Ah! my brethren, be not baptised, neither by the paw of that wolf, nor the claw of the tiger. Believe me, it is better not to be baptised at all, as our custom is. Baptism may be good; but it is as well to have nothing to do with it: all that is necessary is, to be inspired with the spirit. You have only to wait, and it will come and teach you more in one moment, than these quacks could in their whole life.

*English Parson.* Ah! my lambs, what monsters come hither to devour you. My dear flock, know ye not, that the church of England is the only pure church; hath not our chaplains, who came to Canton to drink punch, told you so?

*Jesuit.* The church of England is a deserter, who hath renounced the pope ; and the pope is infallible.

*Lutheran.* Your pope is an ass, as Luther pronounces him to be. My dear Chinese, pay no attention to the pope, the church of England, the Molinists, the Jansenists, or Quaker ; but believe only the Lutherans ; if you pronounce but these words, *in, cum, sub*, you may drink what you please.

*Puritan.* We deplore, my brethren, your blindness, and that of those people ; but thanks be to God, the Eternal has sent me hither at this moment to confound these babblers : listen to my discourse, for you must know, that in the fourth century of the—

*Mahometan.* By the death of Mahomet ! What vain discourse ! If one of these dogs attempt to bark again, I will cut off his ears. As to their prepuce I would not give myself any trouble about it. It is you, my dear Chinese, that I wish to circumcise. I will give you eight days to prepare yourselves for it ; and after that, if any of you attempt to drink wine, you must ask my permission.

*Jew.* Ah ! my children, if you wish to be circumcised, give me the preference ; I will permit you to drink as much wine as you please, but if you are so impious as to eat hogs' flesh, you will be roasted by a slow fire.

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*Heaven.*—It has been correctly observed by Bolingbroke and others, that successive races and castes of mankind have formed their gods and their heavens agreeably to their own characters and desires. The American Indians calculate on finding successful chaces after wild animals, verdant plains, and no winter. The more amorous Asiatic thinks about nothing but the enjoyment of the most delightful women as his future lot in immortal life. The African hopes for the accomplishment hereafter of those desires about home, friends, and plenty of food, in which he suffers abstinence here. The European is corrupted with all sorts of wild metaphysical notions, and each forms his heaven and hereafter in his own way, and after his own frenzied imagination.

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*A Particular Interposition of Providence.*—The opinion of Dr. Hawkesworth on this topic is said to have cost him his life ; for the clamor excited against him by priests and bigots, on account of a passage in the preface to the first Voyages of Byron and Cook, in which he ventured to deny the doctrine of a particular providence, had an effect upon his health and spirits which he could not surmount.

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*The Mechanism.*—According to the system of necessity, vice is no more in our own power than virtue : we act in both cases under the impressions which certain objects make on our senses, and these senses move our desires, desires operate on the will, and the will produces the action ; the rectitude or depravity of any man's conduct, therefore, depends on the impressions which he receives in his youth ; for these impressions, frequently repeated, become habits, and form the character of the man : hence will be seen the necessity of a virtuous education. Let no man

be alarmed at the idea of his being a mere machine, for at any rate he is not of his own making, and therefore has no more right to claim a liberty of action than the right of making himself; he can do nothing which is not intended by a superior power, and therefore he need not fear being impelled to vice by an irresistible propensity; for if such is the will of providence, it is not in his power to resist, though he may suffer for his imprudence: I will not venture to maintain that whatever is, is right; but I will affirm that it cannot be otherwise than it is.

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*To interpret.*—Among many instances that might be produced of oracles and men pretending to know the will of God, the two which are now cited are, the one the most serious, and the other the most ridiculous: The Carians, when attacked by Harpagus, one of Cyrus's generals, and threatened with the loss of their liberty, determined to defend themselves by cutting a canal across an isthmus, and make their country an island; but finding some difficulty in it from the rocky nature of the ground, they consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphos, who returned them for answer, "That they must desist, for Jupiter would have made their peninsula an island, if he had chosen it." On the proposal being laid before the council of Castile, they returned for answer, after much deliberation, "That if God had chosen it to be so, he would have made it so; and therefore they begged leave to reject the proposal."

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*Anima Mundi.*—It is somewhat singular, that as the vital spirit of man has been personified under the name of the soul, so the vital principle of the universe has been personified under the name of God; and yet neither can be proved to have any separate existence distinct from matter.

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*Free Press Association.*—The regular monthly meeting of the Association takes place tomorrow, (Sunday, 3d instant,) at half past 10 o'clock forenoon, precisely. Punctual attendance is requested. The theological lectures, as usual, at half past 2 o'clock P. M. The scientific lectures will be continued on Sunday, 10th instant, at 11 o'clock forenoon.

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Books for sale at the office of the *Correspondent*:

*Ecce Homo!* or a Critical Inquiry into the History of the Life of Jesus of Nazareth—75 cents in boards.

*The People's Rights Reclaimed*; being an Exposition of the unconstitutionality of the Law of the State of New York *compelling* the observance of a religious Sabbath—25 cents.

*View of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments in favor of Materialism*—25 cents.

*Paine's Theological Works, complete*, 8vo., bound and gilt—\$2; bds. \$1.50.

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